

Open Debate on International Peacekeeping Operations
26th of August, 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E Mr. Rosenthal, Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala wishes to join the delegations that have expressed their horror at the attack carried out this morning in Abuja. We offer our profound condolences to the United Nations family and the Government and people of Nigeria.

Allow me, Sir, to thank you for having convened this open debate on the subject of United Nations peacekeeping operations, and in particular for the very pertinent concept note you prepared to guide our debate (S/2011/496, annex). I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his presentation to us this morning.

Guatemala is a country that has benefited from United Nations peacekeeping, especially in the area of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration immediately after our peace accords were signed in late 1996. We have also participated actively in peacekeeping operations as a troop-contributing country. In other words, we have been both a beneficiary of and contributor to peacekeeping, and the topic is therefore of more than passing interest to us.

We agree with the concept note that peacekeeping operations have been a central enterprise of our Organization, and, on balance, highly successful. Their nature and scope have changed considerably over the years, especially since the landmark report of Lakhdar Brahimi of 2000 (S/2000/809). We note from the United Nations website on peacekeeping that, since then, the Secretariat has prepared 21 major reports on the subject, covering many areas that had not previously been taken into account. There is also a forward-looking agenda thanks to the New Horizon process, of which the concept note curiously makes no mention. Peacekeeping also dovetails into peacebuilding, which widens and deepens this thematic topic.

I would like to address only one aspect of this broad and complex topic, which relates to the distribution of responsibilities among Member States in peacekeeping operations. The issue is mentioned in the concept note, but my inspiration comes primarily from my personal experience chairing the discussions in the Fifth Committee on the peacekeeping budget for July 2011 to June 2012. My main point is that, so long as roughly 90 per cent of the budget is provided by less than 10 industrialized countries, while roughly 90 per cent of the troops are provided by a different set of 10 developing countries, we will have a great deal of accumulated tension that is tantamount to an accident waiting to happen, or, if you will, a potential collision between States that could compromise the future of such endeavours.

A statement of only five, or rather four, minutes does not leave much room for elaboration, and even less for formulating proposals. But the diagnosis is clear. We must rationalize the manner in which the rates of reimbursement for costs undertaken by troop contributing countries are calculated. On the other side of the equation, we may want to revisit the scale of assessments to finance peacekeeping.

My main concern, however, arises from the troop contributor's point of view. There is no rational explanation of how the rates for compensating troop and equipment contributors are calculated, and no rational cost-benefit analysis on United Nations peacekeeping as a whole. Of course, the benefit of saving lives and keeping the peace cannot be expressed in dollars and cents, but the costs of doing so do have precise numerical values. The only thing we have to go on for now is that, clearly, the United Nations is getting value for money when it comes to peacekeeping.

In our judgment, it is not useful to view peacekeeping as a large-scale outsourcing exercise through which developed countries contract lower-cost troops from developing countries to carry out the hard and dangerous work. Among other things, this is quite degrading for troop-contributing countries.

Speaking for my own country at least, we perceive participation in peacekeeping not as a well remunerated service, but as a genuine partnership under the flag of the United Nations in order to accomplish what the Charter intended — the noble aim of keeping the peace. It is the sense of pride and professionalization of our

armed forces, as well as a sense of commitment, that motivate us to participate in peacekeeping, even in countries far from our own, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Having said that, we expect to recuperate the cost of our participation in peacekeeping, in the spirit reflected in General Assembly resolution 63/285 and further developed in paragraphs 69 and 70 of resolution 65/289 on the review of the methodology for rates of reimbursement to troop-contributing countries.